

Remarks at the Farm Progress Show in Alleman, Iowa

August 31, 2004

The President. Thank you all for coming. It's great to be back in the great State of Iowa. As you can see, I'm traveling in pretty good company. Speaking about people who gave a great speech last night, John McCain did exactly what I hoped he would do, which is set the message straight about our record in fighting this war on terror. I'm proud to call John a friend. He is, in fact, a hero, as Glen said, and he's a great United States Senator from the State of Arizona. Thanks for coming, John. I'm proud to be with you.

It's good to be here at the Farm Show. You know, some people think you can find the heart and soul of America in Hollywood. I think you find it right here in Iowa, and I appreciate you coming out to say hello.

I wish Laura were here. She's getting ready. She's warming up for her speech tonight. *[Laughter]* She's getting ready to talk to the Nation, and I'm glad she is. She's a great mom, a wonderful wife, and she's a great First Lady for this country. I'm really proud of her—really proud of her. I'm going to be talking to you today about why I think you ought to put me in there for 4 more years. But perhaps the most important reason of all is so that Laura is the First Lady for 4 more years.

I want to thank my friend Glen Keppy. He's the chairman of the Farmers for Bush campaign here in this great State. It's a vital position because you got a lot of farmers here. *[Laughter]* He's a good man. He's been a friend for a long time. I said, "Would you help me get out and get my message out in the ag community?" He said, "You bet." He said, "Why don't you come over here to the Farm Show. Maybe a couple of people will show up and say hello." I'm glad you're here, Glen, and thank you for putting this on. I want to thank all the people who have organized this great event.

I appreciate Karen Nussle is here. She's the wife of my friend Congressman Jim Nussle.

I'm sorry Senator Grassley is not here. He's a good one. I enjoy working with him. We're getting a lot done together for Iowa,

and I appreciate working with Chuck. I remember campaigning in your State a lot. Every time I'd go with him he'd say, "Oh, Farmer Jones lives here," and then you'd go down the road about another mile, and he'd know the name of that farmer; then he'd know the name of that farmer's wife. He probably knows everyone here names too. *[Laughter]* That's because he loves his State. He's doing a fine job.

I appreciate the mayor, Mayor Bodenstein, for being here. Mayor, I appreciate you coming. I think the only thing I'd suggest is you make sure you fill the potholes. *[Laughter]* I appreciate you, though, Mr. Mayor. Thanks for your service.

I know my friend Stew Iverson is here, of the State senate. I know we've got a lot of local officials and State officials here. Thank you for serving, and thank you for coming.

There's members of the ex-Governors club here. I'm one of those members. Terry Branstad and Bob Ray are with us, and I'm honored they are here—fine friends and great people.

My friend Stan Thompson is running for the United States Congress, and I hope you give him a good look. He's a good fellow.

Jan Lyons, president of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, is with us. They have given me their endorsement. I am honored to be endorsed by the Cattlemen of the United States of America. Got the corn growers represented here by Len Corzine. I appreciate Len coming. I appreciate all the corn growers being here too, by the way. Ron Heck, the chairman of the American Soybean Association, is with us. I appreciate Ron coming. I want to thank Keith Berry, whose pork people are here, pork grower—hog raisers—*[laughter]*—Pork Producers Council. I want to thank Craig Lang, who is the President of the Iowa Farm Bureau.

Most of all, I want to thank you for coming. I'm here to let you know I'm asking for your vote. I believe you got to get out—*[applause]*.

I got more work to do on behalf of the American people. You know, we've got a really good record. We've done a lot in office, and we've come through a lot together. But there's only one reason to look back, and that

is to determine who best to lead us forward. I'm here to let you know I've got more to do to make this country safer and America a more hopeful place, and I'd like your help. I'd like you to go to your friends and neighbors and remind them, in a democracy we have a duty to vote. In this great country, we have an obligation, in my judgment, as citizens to go to the polls. And the first step is to register people.

So if you don't mind, as we're coming down the stretch, why don't you find friends and neighbors and say, "As an—you got an obligation as an American to vote, and so, register to vote." And then when you're heading them to the polls and you get them going our way—[laughter]—tell them if they want a stronger America, a safer America, and a better America, to put Dick Cheney and me back in office.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I'm running with a good man in Vice President Cheney. I admit it, he's not the prettiest face on the ticket. [Laughter] I did not pick him for his looks. I picked him because of his sound advice, his great experience, and because he can get the job done.

I'm running because we—I know we've got more to do to make our public schools the centers of excellence they can be. You know, 3 years ago, when we got into office, there was too many of our kids getting shuffled through the school, grade after grade, year after year, without learning the basics. So we challenged what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. We've raised the bar. We believe in accountability. We believe in local control of schools. We're willing to challenge schools that will not teach and will not change. Every child in America deserves an excellent education.

I'm running again because I know we've got to do more to make health care available and affordable. You might remember that old Medicare debate. They called it "Mediscare." People would talk about it, but nobody would touch it. I was worried that the Medicare system was not fulfilling the promise to our seniors. You know, a senior would go in and get a heart operation for \$100,000. The Government would pay for it,

but they wouldn't pay for the prescription drugs that would prevent the heart operation from needing to be in the first place.

So I said to Congress, "Why don't we come together and make sure our seniors have got a modern health care system." We got the job done when it came to strengthening Medicare for our seniors. And working with Chuck Grassley, we've also taken care of our rural hospitals. You know what I'm talking about if you live in rural Iowa. You know how the system wasn't good for the Iowa hospitals and docs. We corrected the problem. We're getting the job done.

We will continue to expand community health centers for low-income Americans. We will expand health savings accounts so families can save tax-free for their own health care needs. I understand most people get their health insurance through the businesses, and most new jobs are created by small businesses. Yet, small businesses are having trouble affording health care. We must allow small businesses to join together so they can buy insurance at the same discounts that big businesses are able to do.

In order to make sure health care is available and affordable here in Iowa, we need to stop these frivolous lawsuits that are running good docs out of business and running up the cost of your health care. See, I don't think you can be pro-doctor and pro-patient and pro-plaintiff-attorney at the same time. I think you have to choose. My opponent made his choice, and he put him on the ticket. [Laughter] I made my choice. I am for medical liability reform now.

In all we do to improve health care in America, we'll make sure that the health decisions are made by doctors and patients, not by bureaucrats in Washington, DC.

I'm running because I know there's more to do to keep this economy strong. We've been through a lot together when it came to this economy. We've been through a recession. We've been through corporate scandals. The terrorist attack hurt our economy.

And yet, we've got an economy that's growing. We've overcome the obstacles. We've overcome them because we've got

great workers. We've overcome them because we've got great farmers. We've overcome those obstacles because the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and the small-business sector of this economy is alive and well. And I believe we've overcome those obstacles because of well-timed tax cuts.

Our view was, "If you pay taxes, you ought to get relief." We also helped our families by raising the child credit. We reduced the marriage penalty. I think the Tax Code ought to encourage marriage, not discourage marriage. We helped our small businesses. We helped them purchase equipment. This time, the check was actually in the mail, too. [Laughter]

Because we acted, our economy has been growing at rates as fast as any in nearly 20 years. The national unemployment rate is at 5.5 percent, which is well below the national average of the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s. The unemployment rate in your great State is at 4.4 percent. Our economic recovery plan is working.

A strong farm economy is good for our Nation's economy, and we have a strong farm economy today. We're seeing record exports for farm products. Farm income is up. And that means people are making a living here in rural Iowa. And that is good for the United States of America, and I intend to keep it that way.

There's more work to be done to make sure this economy grows. I submitted an energy plan to the United States Congress. It needs to get the energy plan to my desk. The energy plan says, "We'll work on conservation. We'll have clean coal technology. We'll explore for natural gas in environmentally friendly ways." But it's an energy plan that also recognizes the vast potential of corn and soybeans. I believe in ethanol, and I believe in biodiesel. See, I think, one of these days, with good research, a President is going to be sitting at the desk there in the Oval Office; somebody is going to walk in and say, "Guess what, Mr. President. The corn crop is up, and we're less dependent on foreign sources of energy."

I believe we ought to have wise trade policy in order to make sure this economy grows and people can find work here in America. We open up our markets for other—to other

countries, and that's good for you. You see, when you have more product to choose from, you're going to get a—what you're demanding at a better price and better quality. That's the way the market works. So instead of shutting down our markets, we'll continue to open up other people's markets. If people treat us the way we treat them, we can compete with anybody, anyplace, anywhere in the world.

That's why we've been—I've been out there working to have free trade agreements with countries all around the world. It's good for Iowa farmers that we're opening up markets. See, I think you can compete with any farmer, anyplace, anytime, and all you need is a chance, a level playing field. This administration is committed to making sure Iowa farm products are sold all over the world.

Every day is Earth Day when you own your own land. The best conservation policy starts with encouraging our farmers and ranchers to conserve. That's why I'm such a strong believer in the CRP program. It's a good program. It's good for wildlife. It's good for land. It's good for the families who make a living off the farm. Right now we have about 35 million acres of farm land in the program, and I know you know that contracts covering roughly two-thirds of the existing land in that program are scheduled to expire in 2007 and 2008. To make sure the farmlands stay protected, I've directed the Secretary of Agriculture to offer early reenrollments and extensions on existing projects, existing contracts.

There's more work to do to make sure this economy continues to grow. One thing we got to do, be smart about how we spend your money in Washington, DC. And the other thing is to keep your taxes low. The worst thing that could happen to our economy right now is to let them run up your taxes on you. I'm running against a fellow who's promised over \$2 trillion of new spending, and we still got September and October to go. [Laughter]

So they said, "How you going to pay for it?" He said, "Oh, we're just going to tax the rich." Now, you've heard that before, haven't you? Yes. When you hear them in Washington say "tax the rich," hang on to your wallet. [Laughter] But the good news is,

we're not going to let him tax anybody because we're going to win Iowa and win the country in '04.

We have more to do to wage and win the war on terror. America's future depends on our willingness to lead in this world. If America shows weakness or uncertainty in this decade, the world will drift toward tragedy. This isn't going to happen on my watch.

The world changed on a terrible September morning, and since that day, we have changed the world. Before September the 11th, Afghanistan served as the home base of Al Qaida, which trained and deployed thousands of killers and set up cells around the world, including the United States. Because we acted, Afghanistan is a rising democracy. Because we acted, over 10 million Afghan citizens have registered to vote in the October Presidential elections. Because we acted, many young girls go to school for the first time in Afghanistan. Because we acted, Afghanistan is an ally in the war on terror. Because we acted, America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, Libya was spending millions to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Today, because America and our allies have sent a strong and easy-to-understand message, the leader of Libya has abandoned his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, and America and the world are safer.

Before September the 11th, the ruler of Iraq was a sworn enemy of America. He was defying the world. He was firing weapons at American pilots who were enforcing the world's sanctions. He had used weapons of mass destruction. He harbored terrorists. He invaded his neighbors. He funded—he subsidized the families of suicide bombers. Saddam Hussein and his henchmen killed thousands of his own citizens. He was a source of great instability in the world's most volatile region. I saw a threat.

After September the 11th, this country must deal with threats before they fully materialize. One of the lessons of that day is that when we see a threat, we can no longer hope for the best. We must deal with those threats. We must never forget that lesson, for the security of our people.

So I went to the United States Congress. The Congress looked at the same intelligence I had looked at. They remembered the same history of Saddam Hussein. They concluded that Saddam Hussein was a threat and authorized the use of force. Members of both political parties came to that conclusion, including my opponent.

The last choice of the Commander in Chief is to commit troops into combat. We must try all means necessary to deal with threats before they fully materialize. So I went to the United Nations. I said, "Saddam Hussein is a threat." They looked at the same intelligence, and they came to the same conclusion we had come to that Saddam Hussein was a threat, and by a 15-to-nothing vote in the U.N. Security Council said Saddam Hussein must disclose, disarm, or face serious consequence. The world spoke, and the world spoke with one voice.

But as he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein defied the demands of the free world. He wasn't about to listen to what the world had said. As a matter of fact, when inspectors were sent into Iraq, he systematically deceived the inspectors. So I had a choice to make: Do I forget the lessons of September the 11th and trust a madman, or take action to defend this country. Given that choice, I will defend America every time.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Even though we did not find the stockpiles that we all thought were there, Saddam Hussein had the capability to make weapons of mass destruction, and he could have passed that capability on to his enemies. And that was a risk this country could not afford to have taken after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, I would have made the same decision. America and the world are safer with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell.

Now, almost 2 years after he voted for the war in Iraq and 7 months after switching positions to declare himself the antiwar candidate, my opponent has found another nuance. He now agrees it was the right decision to go into Iraq. See, after months of questioning my motives and even my credibility, my opponent now agrees with me that even though we didn't find the stockpiles we

thought were there, knowing everything we know today, he would have voted to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power. And I thank him for clearing that up. [Laughter] But I want to caution you, there's still a little over 60 days left for him to change his mind again.

We have more to do. I'm running because I know we have more to do to make this country secure. We'll continue to work with our friends and allies around the world to aggressively pursue the terrorists and foreign fighters in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. See, you cannot talk sense to these people. You cannot negotiate with them. You cannot hope for the best. We must pursue them around the world so we do not have to face them here at home.

We are winning this war against these terrorists, and we will win this war against these terrorists. In order to do so, America must continue to lead the world with confidence and moral clarity. We put together a strong coalition to help us defeat these people. There's nearly 40 nations involved in Afghanistan, some 30 nations involved in Iraq. Over the next 4 years, I will continue to build coalitions so we can work together. It's in our interest. We have good, strong coalitions. It's in the interest of others that we work together. But I will never turn over America's national security decision to leaders of other countries.

We'll keep our commitment to help the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. We set a clear goal. Those countries will be peaceful. They'll be democratic, and they'll be allies in the war on terror. We'll keep our commitment because when America gives its word, America must keep its word. We'll keep our commitment because it's in our interest that free societies emerge in those countries. Our strategy is clear. We'll provide enough security so they can head for elections. And at the same time, we'll help Afghans and Iraqis assume the duties necessary for a free society to emerge. We're training their troops. We're training their police, so they can do the hard work of defeating the few who want to deny the hopes and ambitions of the many. Our military will complete this mission as quickly as possible so our troops do not stay a day longer than necessary.

Our troops are keeping our commitments around the world. We have got a fantastic United States military. I've seen their great decency and their unselfish courage. And I have made a pledge to them and their loved ones that our Government will support them in their missions. And that's why, last September, I went to the United States Congress, while our troops were in combat in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and proposed supplemental funding to support them in their mission. The legislation provided funding for body armor and vital equipment, hazard pay, health benefits, ammunition, fuel, and spare parts. It was a very important piece of legislation and funding. It was necessary. We had great bipartisan support. As a matter of fact, the support was so strong that only 12 Members of the United States Senate voted against it, 2 of whom are my opponent and his runningmate.

So they said, "Why did you vote against this vital legislation?" He said, "I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it." I spend a lot of time here in this State. I've never heard anybody talk like that in Iowa. [Laughter] They pressed him further, and he said, well, he's proud of the vote. And finally, he said it's just a complicated matter. There's nothing complicated about supporting our troops in combat.

In the long run, our security is not guaranteed by force alone. We will work to change the conditions that give rise to terror, poverty and hopelessness and resentment. See, a free and democratic Iraq and a free and democratic Afghanistan will serve as powerful examples in a part of the world that is desperate for freedom. Free countries do not export terror. Free countries provide hope for their people. The best way to defeat terror in the long run is to spread liberty around the world.

I believe in the transformational power of liberty. I've spent time sitting at a table with Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan. My dad fought against the Japanese; your dad's fought against the Japanese. But because we believed in—liberty could transform people, after World War II, my predecessor and many in this country worked with Japan to become a self-governing, democratic nation. And so when you hear me talk about the

transformational power of liberty, think about the fact that I'm talking to the head of a former enemy that's now an ally in peace. When we sit around the table, we're talking about how to make the world more peaceful. Someday, an elected official from the United States and a duly elected leader of Iraq will be talking about how to make the world a more peaceful place.

By serving the ideal of liberty, we're making America more secure. And by serving the ideal of liberty, we're serving the deepest ideals of the American spirit. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

We'll continue to work hard to protect you here at home. We've created the Department of Homeland Security to better organize our Government to deal with the threats of the 21st century. No, there's great communication now between the Federal, State, and local levels. I want to thank the first-responders here in the great State of Iowa for serving your communities. The FBI and the CIA are talking better. We're reorganizing the intelligence-gathering to make sure we get the very best information possible to protect the American people.

We must renew the PATRIOT Act so our law enforcement has the tools necessary to defend you against terrorist threat. We must do a better job of securing our borders and our ports.

We're working hard. We're working hard to make this country more secure, and we'll continue to press for needed reforms in Washington. But it's hard in that city for reform. There's a lot of entrenched interests there, a lot of people who like the status quo. It's not enough to advocate reform; you have to be able to get the job done.

So when you're out there gathering up the vote, remind people in this great State that when it comes to reforming schools and improving education for every child in America, we're getting the job done; that when it comes to health care reforms to help rural hospitals in Iowa and to help families and seniors, we're getting the job done; and when it comes to improving our economy and keeping this ag economy strong in America, we're getting the job done; that when it

comes to better securing this homeland, defeating the terrorists, and spreading freedom and peace, we're getting the job done. And remind them, when it comes time to choose a President, put somebody back in there who can get the job done.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. At my convention speech Thursday—I guess I better get home and write it here pretty soon—[laughter]—I'm going to talk about the fact we're in a changing world, and the role of Government is to help people during a changing world, not to give them orders but to stand side by side so people can realize their dreams.

And one of the ways to do that is to promote an ownership society in America. In changing times, if you own something, it provides stability. For example, in changing times, if you own and control your own health care account, you can take it from job to job. In changing times, it's helpful for younger workers to be able to take some of their own money and have a personal savings account in Social Security that they can call their own. In changing times—by the way, for baby boomers and older, we're in good shape in Social Security. Nothing is going to change because it's solvent for us. It's the younger workers we need to worry about.

In changing times, we want more people owning their own business, owning their own farm, owning a piece of the future of America. In changing times, we want more people owning their own home. Do you realize the homeownership rate in America is at an all-time high? More and more people are owning their own home. I think there's nothing better in America than somebody who says, "Welcome to my home. Welcome to my piece of property." See, when you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country.

In changing times, there's some things that won't change, the individual values we try to live by, courage, integrity, and reverence, and compassion. Our beliefs in liberty and opportunity and the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity won't change. In changing times, we'll protect the institutions that give us direction and purpose, our families and our schools and our religious congregations.

We stand for institutions like marriage and family, which are the foundations of society. We stand for a culture of life in which every person matters and every person counts. We stand for judges who faithfully interpret the law instead of legislating from the bench.

We stand for a culture of responsibility in America. You know, the culture of our country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're a mom or a dad, if you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart and all your soul. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for supporting your teachers and doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. You know, there's quiet times in the life of this Nation when little is expected of its leaders. This isn't one of those times. This is a time that requires firm resolve, steadfast purpose, and a deep belief in the values that make us a great nation.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers on September the 14th, 2001. It's a day I'll never forget. There were workers in hardhats yelling at me at the top of their lungs, "Whatever it takes." I remember thanking people for their hard work, and a guy grabbed me by the arm, and he looked me in the eye with his bloodshot eyes, and he said, "Do not let me down."

I have a duty that has gone on since that day. I wake up every morning trying to best determine how to protect our country. I will never relent in defending America, whatever it takes.

We've come through a lot together. We've done a lot of hard work. There's more to be

done to make sure our schools reach their full potential. There's more to be done to spread opportunity to every single corner of this country. There's more to be done to pass the values of this land on to another generation. There's more to be done to spread freedom and peace so our children can grow up in a peaceful world.

You know, when I campaigned across your State, I said if you gave me the honor of holding this office, I would uphold the honor and dignity of the office to which I had been elected. With your help, with your hard work, I will do so for the next 4 years.

Thanks for coming, and may God bless. Thank you all very much. God bless you all. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. at the Alleman Farm. In his remarks, he referred to Glen Keppy, chairman, Iowa Farm Team, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; Mayor Bill Bodenstiner of Alleman, IA; Iowa State Senator Stewart Iverson; former Governors Terry Branstad and Robert D. Ray of Iowa; Stan Thompson, candidate for Congress in Iowa's 3d Congressional District; Jan Lyons, president, National Cattlemen's Beef Association; Leon "Len" Corzine, first vice president, 2004 Corn Board, National Corn Growers Association; Ron Heck, chairman, American Soybean Association; Keith Berry, president, board of directors, National Pork Producers Council; Craig Lang, president, board of directors, Iowa Farm Bureau; Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. He also referred to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), administered by the Farm Service Agency, United States Department of Agriculture.

Remarks in Columbus, Ohio

September 1, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Thank you all very much. What a warm welcome. It doesn't get any better than being introduced by Jack Nicklaus in Columbus, Ohio. While you were cheering, I asked him if he had any advice for my golf game. He said, "Quit." [Laughter] I'm so honored to be here with Jack and Barbara Nicklaus. He is a—what a class act. And I'm proud to have him endorse my candidacy for the Presidency of the United States.